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C O N F I D E N T I A L BUJUMBURA 000201

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DEPT FOR AF/C

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2017/03/15
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [BY](#)
SUBJECT: DAS SWAN VISIT TO BURUNDI: TACKLING OBSTACLES TO
PROGRESS

Classified By: Ambassador Patricia Moller for Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

¶1. (SBU) Summary: In a meeting with Deputy Assistant Secretary(DAS) for African Affairs, James Swan,

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Burundian President Nkurunziza expressed appreciation for the continued support of the American people and emphasized Burundi,s commitment to political and economic stability. During a visit to Burundi March 11-13, DAS Swan acknowledged Burundi,s actions to reinforce the authority of democratically elected leaders, promote good governance, and move toward judicial independence and transparency. In response, the GOB outlined certain developments that threaten Burundi,s recent progress, including the progress of the reintegration of the rebel PALIPEHUTU-FNL through the Joint Verification and Monitoring mechanism (JVMM); possible human rights violations in the eastern province of Muyinga; and deposed CNDD-FDD party president Hussein Radjabu's purported attempt to disrupt the legislative processes by forming a new parliamentary group. While recognizing these events as possible impediments to progress, Burundi,s leaders emphasized their ability to learn from their mistakes and to work to overcome setbacks. The GOB highlighted its concern for poverty and emphasized the need for Burundi to transition from conflict resolution to economic development. End Summary.

¶2. (U) This cable is the first in a series of three discussing DAS Swan,s visit to Burundi. A second cable will highlight DAS Swan,s discussions concerning the PALIPEHUTU-FNL,s threats to suspend their participation in the JVMM process. The last in the series will focus on DAS Swan,s discussion with the Ministry of Defense on the subject of Burundi,s contribution to the Somali peacekeeping effort.

¶3. (C) During a visit to Burundi March 11 - 13, Deputy Assistant Secretary for African Affairs James Swan delivered a message of congratulations from the United States to key government officials and influential members of civil society. In response, the GOB expressed its appreciation for recognition and support as a signal of the excellent relations between the United States and Burundi.

¶4. (C) President Pierre Nkurunziza conveyed his gratitude for U.S. interest in Burundi, as exemplified by the recent visits of DAS Swan and General William Ward. President Nkurunziza opined that Burundi's progress in conflict resolution can be credited to friendly nations such as the U.S.; he hoped for a continued partnership in the future. The President

acknowledged recent political events which threaten to blunt Burundi's achievements and recognized Burundi's need to transition from democratic stabilization to social and economic growth to counter future setbacks.

15. (C) The Second Vice President, Gabriel Ntisezerana, noted that recent events have not supported the progress made by the Burundian people. However, he emphasized that what is important is the ability to learn from one's mistakes and to overcome setbacks. Burundi's Minister of Planning, Development and National Reconstruction, Mr. Abdallah Tabu Manirakiza, stressed Burundi's reliance on the United States to help stabilize the peace process, advance development, and establish a culture of good governance.

16. (U) DAS Swan acknowledged the success of Burundi's peace process, conflict resolution and reconciliation as a victory for the country and an example for Africa. He commended Burundi's actions to reinforce the authority of democratically elected leaders, promote good governance, and applauded strides toward judicial independence and support for transparency.

Economic Concerns

17. (C) While recognizing the progress made in the areas of conflict resolution and good governance, the GOB also highlighted its concern for the population's continued poverty and suffering. Manirakiza warned that Burundi could lose all the gains it has made if it is unable effectively to fight poverty. The Second Vice President, Ntisezerana, made a strong request for U.S. support for the upcoming Donor's Conference to be held in May. He noted that Burundi could experience dangerous setbacks unless it receives continued support from the international community. He recognized the

importance of drafting and presenting strategic documents at the conference that will be acceptable to the donor community. In closing, Ntisezerana emphasized the need for Burundi to transition from conflict resolution to economic development.

Possible Human Rights Abuses and Political Infighting

18. (C) DAS Swan also sought clarity on recent events that threaten to blemish Burundi's progress, including reported human rights violations in the eastern province of Muyinga and an attempt by deposed CNDD-FDD party president, Hussein Radjabu, to disrupt legislative processes by forming a new parliamentary group.

19. (C) In response to DAS Swan's concern for reported human rights abuses, the Minister of Good Governance, State General Inspectorate and Local Administration, Mr. Vnant Kamana, confessed that "many things went wrong last year"; although many people were questionably imprisoned, the presiding judges handled the situations properly. In reference to reports of questionable arrests and killings in the northeast region of Muyinga, Kamana stated that Burundi's Ministry of Justice is forming a panel charged with conducting an inquiry into possible human rights abuses, including the extra-judicial arrests and murders of individuals thought to be in opposition to the ruling party and government. In closing, he predicted that 2007 would be a year of change and improvement in judicial procedures and transparency. During his visit, DAS Swan also met with representatives of human rights groups and other civil society organizations. They acknowledged progress in the government's human rights record, but stressed the need for continued follow-up to ensure that those responsible for abuses (e.g., in Muyinga) are brought to justice.

110. (C) Many government officials commented on deposed CNDD-FDD ruling party president Hussein Radjabu's possible

attempt to organize a new parliamentary group within the National Assembly. The new "bloc" could be used as a tool for opposition to future legislative procedures, notably any additional initiatives to curb Radjabu,s influence over CNDD-FDD party politics and executive decisions. First Vice President, Dr. Martin Nduwimana, conceded that Radjabu,s strategy could be an impediment to stability; however, he views the ploy as primarily a CNDD-FDD party issue. Nduwimana, a member of the opposition UPRONA party, noted that, with time, "everyone will realize that the (CNDD-FDD) party is not the tool of one individual". In summarizing his views on the possibility of Radjabu,s parliamentary group, Minister of Good Governance Kamana commented that Burundi,s stability is still fragile; he stressed the need for the continued support and advice &from friends such as the United States⁸.

¶11. (SBU) Comment: While noting the need for continued improvement in areas of human rights and transparency, DAS Swan used this visit to congratulate the GOB for the overall success of the peace process since 2005 and for the important progress made in recent months in reversing what had been a worrisome downward trend through most of 2006. End Comment.
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